

4-H Mentoring: Youth and Families with Promise

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Program of Distinction Category

Leadership, Citizenship & Life Skills Categories

- Leadership Development

Healthy Lifestyles Categories

- Diversity & Inclusive Environments
- Healthy Relationships, Good Decisions

Youth in Governance Categories

- Youth Decision-making
- Youth & Adult Partnerships

Sources of funding that support this program

Children, Youth, and Families at Risk Program (CYFAR) 2005-2008
\$300,000, City and County Governments 2001-2006 \$216,226, School
Districts 2001-2006 \$47,908, State Cooperative Extension Legislation Funds
1998-present \$791,700, US Department of Justice (JUMP) 2003-2006
\$220,000, US Department of Labor (Small Business Administration) 2004-
2006 \$989,477, US Department of Education 2004-2007 \$582,936, Utah
County Workforce Services 2003-2006 \$194,632, Utah Housing Authority
2003-2006 \$184,111, Various Donations / Private Foundations 2001-2006
\$35,237

Knowledge and Research Base

In an effort to reduce and prevent juvenile delinquency, Utah State University (USU) Cooperative Extension System has made it a priority to promote the *developmental assets* (Search Institute, 1998, 2004) of youth at-risk and their families. The State 4-H office has led this work as part of their overarching mission to "assist youth in acquiring knowledge, building character, and developing life skills in a fun learning environment that will enable them to become self-directing, productive members of society" (Utah 4-H, 2006). In developing the 4-H Mentoring: Youth and Families with Promise program (YFP), State 4-H staff and researchers from the USU Department of Family, Consumer, and Human Development, reviewed the research literature and observed important relationships between individual, familial, peer characteristics, and juvenile delinquent behaviors (Ferber, Gains, & Goodman, 2006; Hawkins & Catalano, 1996). It was also observed that various programs already existed to promote

developmental assets in youth at-risk. In light of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory, it was hypothesized that the integration of mentoring and family interventions into established programs, such as 4-H, would reinforce and enhance large-scale efforts to promote developmental assets. The YFP program is distinctive in that its multi-component approach focuses on (a) youth that influence, and are influenced, by the environment and (b) multiple contexts and interrelationships in which youth can develop strengths and assets (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998).

Integrating mentoring into existing youth programs is considered a promising strategy for youth development (e.g., Kuperminc et al., 2005). The YFP program's integrative approach is consistent with conclusions drawn from reviews of youth development programs regarding programmatic characteristics that lead to positive outcomes. Characteristics of effective programs typically include caring adolescent-adult relationships, designs that are long-term, and approaches that incorporate multiple aspects of the youth development framework (e.g., Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, & Hawkins, 1998; National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2002). The youth development framework, as described by Roth, Brooks-Gunn, Murray and Foster (1998), includes (a) program elements that present youth with new roles and responsibilities, (b) supports for youth, and (c) a focus on enhancing internal assets and competencies. The importance of interacting with, and being influenced by, supportive adults – as an intervention to promote developmental assets – is supported by the empirical literature (Scales & Gibbons, 1996; Benson, Galbraith, & Espeland, 1998) and emphasized in Bronfenbrenner's theory: "The development of the child is enhanced through her increased involvement, from childhood on, in responsible, task-oriented activities outside the home that bring her into contact with adults other than her parents" (1979, p. 282). Consistent with the youth development framework (Roth et al., 1998), Bronfenbrenner stresses roles, relationships, and activities as key elements in the developmental process.

4-H is an example of a well-established youth development program that follows the youth development framework. Youth are afforded opportunities to take on leadership roles and develop competencies via a "learn-by-doing" approach that occurs under the supervision of supportive adult leaders (National 4-H Headquarters, 2005). Formal one-on-one mentoring with adults, however, is not currently a widely-used component of most 4-H programs. The design of YFP infuses the benefits of mentoring with the opportunities afforded through 4-H to make a program that is greater than the sum of its parts. The theoretical foundation and the program design also recognize the integral role parents and caregivers play in supporting and sustaining improvements in developmental assets (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Consequently, it is through a coordinated and collaborative effort that youth in the YFP program are provided with new roles, relationships, and responsibilities, which are encouraged, developed, and reinforced through experiences with 4-H, mentors, and family members.

Needs Assessment

The YFP program originated in 1994 as a response to a community mobilization effort to reduce and prevent juvenile delinquency in Iron County, Utah. With cooperation from the local school district, and many other community

organizations, an extensive evaluation was conducted by researchers at USU to assess the risk and protective factors of the community. In response to needs assessment, organizations were asked to develop programs that

- (a) increased the number of caring adults for children and
- (b) helped connect children and families to supportive networks.

The creation of YFP was one of the efforts spear-headed by the USU Extension System to meet these needs identified by the community-based assessment.

In 2000-2001, researchers from Utah State University conducted a series of focus groups with YFP parents and mentors to gather information on ways to improve the YFP program, which had expanded into 22 counties. Six of the eleven groups were with mentors and five with parents. Mentors requested increased contact with program staff as well as more training materials. Parents recommended more frequent and consistent contact between mentors and youth, plus more communication between mentors, parents, and staff. Program administrators used these recommendations to create training guides for mentors, parents, and youth (see Item 9.c.: Curriculum), and to establish scheduled routine training meetings to help mentors learn how to communicate and work more effectively with youth and families.

In 2004, an external evaluation of YFP participants in Utah's urban counties was conducted by Bach Harrison, LLC. Characteristics of YFP participants were compared to state-wide data collected by the State of Utah. This external evaluation confirmed that YFP participants, compared to their peers, were in fact at risk for poor school performance, family conflict, and poor family management. These findings support the appropriateness of the YFP target goals and targeted population. Enrollment guidelines have been established to ensure that youth at risk for delinquency continue to be enrolled. The Bach Harrison study also included a process evaluation, which documented variability across program sites in mentoring hours, 4-H involvement, and family involvement. Based on the identified needs of participants and the findings from the process evaluation, program standards were implemented to facilitate more consistency.

Goals and Objectives

The YFP program goals are reflected in the Logic Model (Appendix A). The long-term goals of YFP are increased developmental assets and decreased juvenile delinquency. The three, measurable, short-term goals are:

- 1) Improved academic performance
- 2) Enhanced social competencies
- 3) Strengthened family bonds

To meet these goals, YFP objectives include providing quality:

- (a) one-on-one mentoring experiences
- (b) 4-H experiences
- (c) Family Night Out activities
- (d) Mentor support

Youth enrolled in YFP may continue for multiple years. Mentors work directly with youth to build academic and social skills. 4-H activities serve to enhance social competencies through leadership opportunities and group projects, and Family Night Out activities are designed to foster family bonds through experiential learning activities. Once oriented and paired with a mentee, mentors are monitored

and supported by receiving personal contact with their respective site coordinator at least twice each month to assure that one-on-one visits are taking place and to resolve any concerns or obstacles the mentors may be experiencing.

Target Audience

The YFP program is a prevention program for youth at-risk, ages 10-14, and their families. Targeted risks include: below-average school performance, poor social skills, and weak family bonds. Youth are referred by school counselors, teachers, and administrators, as well as other youth-serving organizations. The program is open to youth regardless of race, family status, religion, or other demographic characteristics. Approximately 50 percent of participants live in rural counties; 40 percent, urban counties; and 10 percent, semi-urban counties. Currently, there are 32 sites offering YFP and each site averages 20 youth. Annually, YFP serves approximately 700 youth.

Program Design and Content

Type of program

Youth participate in 4-H clubs that foster social competencies and skill-building, are paired with mentors to engage in academic and interpersonal activities, and attend Family Night Out activities in order to strengthen family bonds. Consistent with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory, the program design of YFP provides multiple supportive contexts in which program goals can be targeted and reinforced. The YFP program operates on an academic year calendar, though in many cases youth stay involved in the program for more than one year.

Methods used to deliver the program

Schools and youth-serving organizations (including Juvenile Court) may refer individuals to the YFP program. Site coordinators screen referrals and meet with the youth and their parent(s) to explain the goals and nature of the program. Once youth are entered into the program, YFP utilizes a three-pronged approach to achieve program goals: improve academic performance, enhance social competency, and strengthen family bonds. Each of the components of the YFP program (Mentoring, 4-H, and Family Night Out) targets at least one of the goals, while simultaneously reinforcing the efforts of the other program components (e.g., mentors encourage and facilitate participation in 4-H).

One-on-one Mentoring. Each youth is matched with a volunteer mentor – typically a young adult – recruited through a local university, the family's religious congregation, or community organizations. Mentors work directly with youth to build academic and social skills by engaging together in a variety of academic, athletic, cultural, and recreational activities. In each interaction, mentors serve as motivators and positive role models for their mentees. Mentoring usually lasts one year; however, in many cases, youth continue to be mentored for more than one year.

4-H Clubs. 4-H clubs provide participants opportunities to develop social competencies and mastery in a variety of subject areas. Clubs typically meet 10-12 times a year and typically consist of 6-10 youth per adult. The 4-H program emphasizes a "learn-by-doing" approach to education and aims to help youth develop responsibility, leadership, and self-direction, as well as interpersonal and

life skills. Each year, YFP youth have the opportunity to demonstrate their skills and achievements through projects entered for competition into their local county fair. Youth in the clubs select their own officers, plan their own programs, and participate in a variety of hands-on activities, ranging from woodworking to fitness.


Family Night Out Activities. Program youth, parents or guardians, and mentors participate in monthly “Family Night Out” (FNO) group activities (Koestler & Betz, 2000). These activities are organized by local YFP site coordinators and provide youth and parents an opportunity to participate in fun and educational experiential activities. The objective of the FNO component is to strengthen family bonds and to improve parent-youth communication. During a FNO, site coordinators and mentors facilitate group activities built around themes such as: building trust, kindness, positive communication, and working together. Each activity is followed by a short “debriefing” of the experience.

Mentor support. Mentors are supported by receiving personal contact with the site coordinator twice a month. Contacts are used to assure quality mentoring is regularly occurring, to provide encouragement, and to resolve any concerns or obstacles the mentors may be experiencing. Based on these personal contacts and the monthly dosage reports submitted by mentors, site coordinators monitor mentoring relationship quality. Feedback is given to both youth and mentors regarding specific areas upon which to build/improve during their time together.

Curricula and/or educational materials

Various resources and curriculum are used in the YFP program. Program staff utilizes a series of orientation manuals adapted and developed for YFP developed for mentors, youth, parents, and site coordinators (Youth and Families with Promise, 2002). The manuals include information detailing individual responsibilities and expectations. Formal mentor training is based on the content summarized in the mentor orientation manual. As part of their orientation, mentors also receive *What Kids Need to Succeed* (Benson, Galbraith, & Espeland, 1998); *Me and My Mentor* (Weinberger, 2000); and *Connect! Learning Activities to Strengthen Assets* (Platt, Pappas, Serfustini, & Riggs, 1999) Mentors may adapt the activities to fit the interests, talents, and skills of their assigned youth.

4-H leaders choose subject-appropriate curriculum and materials from a State-approved compendium of resources. These resources can be downloaded or ordered from www.Utah4H.org.

In planning and facilitating FNO activities, YFP staff utilize a manual titled, *Family Night Out: 4-H Portable Challenge for Families* (Koestler & Betz, 2000). YFP staff has also compiled a *Family Night Out Resource Manual* (Youth and Families with Promise, 1999) 

Partnerships or collaborations

- *Utah State University's Department of Family, Consumer, and Human Development (FCHD):* Faculty from FCHD department oversee the statewide program evaluation. The department also assigns graduate assistants and work-study students to assist with evaluations and publications.
- *Utah Mentoring Partnership (UMP):* The UMP conducts promotional events and fosters awareness of mentoring programs around the state. State YFP staff

serve in the state UMP organization and county YFP staff provide leadership in each of the local UMP chapters.

- *Cache County Food Bank* supplies food for FNO activities and mentor trainings.
- *Colleges and Universities*: Brigham Young University, College of Eastern Utah, and Southern Utah University assist with the recruitment of volunteer mentors and provide on-campus facilities for mentor training. Utah State University Athletics provides tickets to sporting events.
- *County Cooperative Extension Offices*: Each county offering the YFP program provides office space for YFP personnel, secretarial support, and office supplies. County vehicles are also made available to YFP staff.
- *Intermountain Healthcare* in Washington County helps with meals for FNO activities.
- *Parks and Recreation* in Tooele County offers services and facilities for mentoring activities for free or at a reduced cost.
- *School districts and Juvenile Courts*: Formal Memorandums of Understanding give YFP staff access to school and court facilities. With parental consent, YFP staff are also granted access to school records and non-confidential data to assist in the identification of risk and protective factors. School and court officials provide referrals and serve on local YFP Advisory Boards.
- *Utah Housing Authority* in Salt Lake County provides office space for program activities.

Program Evaluation

A logic model is presented in Appendix A. Annual evaluations of the YFP program include:

- (1) Youth reports of academic achievement, social competency, and family bonds.
- (2) Parent reports of youth academic achievement, social competency, and family bonds.
- (3) Mentor reports of youth academic achievement, social competency, and family bonds.
- (4) Assessment of the fidelity of program implementation such as time spent in mentoring, 4-H, and FNO activities.

Process

In 2004, YFP hired a research firm to conduct an external process evaluation of sites in three of Utah's most urban counties (Bach Harrison, 2005). It was found that in many cases, mentor and mentee participation was higher than expected; however, in several cases it was lower. There was inconsistency in FNO and 4-H participation. Results from the process evaluation have been used to refine program implementations and standards. Modifications have included increased mentor training and site coordinator accountability, with greater emphasis on 4-H and FNO involvement.

For the annual internal process evaluation, site coordinators submit individualized "mentee" reports that document time spent in mentoring, 4-H, and FNO activities each month. Additional process data collected include: time between enrollment and "match" to mentor, parental involvement, and number of activities

(4-H and FNO) offered. This information is reviewed to determine if mentors and sites are meeting program standards. The process data is also incorporated into the larger outcome evaluations to account for differential effects of the YFP participation.

Outcomes and Impacts

Also included in the Bach Harrison (2005) evaluation was a controlled comparison of targeted outcomes. Pre- and post-test data were collected on 38 youth participants and 27 parent respondents over a six-month period. The battery of instruments ranged from school performance to delinquent behaviors. Results indicated positive trends on 15 scales and significant outcomes on three additional scales when comparing YFP participants and waiting-list participants. Specifically, children in YFP improved as compared to those who were not enrolled in the YFP program (see Tables 1 and 2).

In addition to the Bach Harrison evaluation, each year an internal evaluation is performed by faculty from Utah State University. Data are collected annually from youth, parents, and mentors. The 2003-2004 and 2004-2005 evaluations used a retrospective pre-test then post-test design. In both years, significant improvements ($p < .001$) were reported for all short-term program goals. Results from youth and parent data are presented in Table 3. The 2005-2006 evaluation has been slightly modified to include a pre-test assessment. This cohort will also be followed over time to more fully assess long-term program impact.

Communication to Stakeholders

Outcome reports are annually prepared by faculty in the FCHD department and are provided to individual site coordinators and county extension offices. County reports are shared with county commissioners, school officials, and interested citizens. Statewide reports of results are annually presented to State legislators, educators, and community members at local, state, and national events. YFP was recently featured in the National Mentoring Center Bulletin (2006) and in the past five years there have been over 40 newspaper articles highlighting local YFP activities and service. These publications are shared with staff, funding supporters, and participating families. Participants, parents, and the public can also access the YFP website (<http://extension.usu.edu/yfp/>) to read about the program, success stories, and outcomes.

Program Sustainability

The original YFP program in 1994 was supported by the USU Extension office in Iron County. Over time, the program expanded into other counties, as did the diversity of support. There continues to be multiple federal, state, county, and local funding streams sustaining YFP (please refer to the list of funding sources detailed under Sources of funding). Some funds are for single years and must be renewed annually. Others, like the Department of Education and CYFAR, provide multi-year grants.

At the county level, Extension Staff meet annually with county commissioners, school officials, and business leaders to show evaluation results, thank them for their on-going support, and encourage continued financial assistance. At the state

and federal levels, YFP staff regularly work with legislators to sustain continual support. These efforts have leveraged millions of dollars for YFP in recent years.

Additional support that sustains YFP comes in the form of hundreds of volunteer mentors, as well as in-kind contributions from local agencies and businesses. Non-financial contributions, which help off-set programming costs, include: office space and secretarial assistance in county 4-H offices, meeting spaces for activities in schools, and food for trainings and FNO activities.

Replication

Since the origination of the first site in Iron County, 25 of Utah's 29 counties have replicated the YFP program. Recent funding from CYFAR has allowed for the implementation of three new YFP sites which have incorporated an after-school academic tutoring component into the program design. The program has been replicated in urban and rural areas and makes necessary adaptations to meet the needs of diverse populations. For example, 14 of the YFP sites have Latino youth participants. Evaluation tools have been developed in Spanish, and site coordinators actively strive to match Spanish-speaking families with Spanish-speaking mentors. The program has also been implemented in two sites on the Navajo Indian reservation in San Juan County. One challenge for replication in San Juan County was the lack of young adult mentors in the area. YFP staff adapted by recruiting high school seniors who lived on the reservation. The success of YFP in San Juan County was recently spotlighted in the National Mentoring Center Bulletin (2006).

Wherever YFP has been replicated, two components appear to be essential for successful implementation:

1. Partnerships, particularly with 4-H and schools
2. A pool of potential mentors and effective recruitment strategies

Rationale and Importance of Program

The YFP program is more than just 4-H. It is more than just mentoring. And, it is more than just facilitated family activities. YFP is an approach to asset development that draws upon the influence of caring adults in various contexts, who support and reinforce positive youth development. The potential positive influence of non-parental adults (i.e., mentors and 4-H leaders) should not be underestimated in light of the "growing body of research show[ing] that kids who feel safe, valued and connected to caring adults are more likely to be positive about life, engaged in school and emotionally healthy; they also are less likely to participate in destructive or delinquent behavior" (Ferber, Gaines, & Goodman, 2005). The individual components of YFP are not innovative in-and-of themselves; however, the coordinated integration of 4-H, mentoring, and Family Night Out activities is unique. The integrative design of YFP is consistent with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) proposition that development is enhanced when:

- (a) youth participate in multiple settings with different but compatible role demands
- (b) at least some of the dyads operate across settings
- (c) communication occurs between settings

The design of YFP provides youth with new roles, relationships, and responsibilities that are encouraged and reinforced across all three programmatic components. Furthermore, the mentor-mentee relationship operates across

contexts with the mentor communicating between settings, supporting youth and family participation, and encouraging involvement in mentoring experiences, 4-H projects, and FNO activities. These characteristics, together with the attributes of established 4-H clubs, create a distinct experience in which the cultivation of developmental assets can flourish.

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Table 1

Pre- and Post-test Means for YFP Participants vs. Waiting List (WL) Participants: YFP School Survey Scales

Scale Name	N	Pre-test	Post-test
Academic Self-perception Scale - YFP	19	4.58	4.79*
<i>Academic Self-perception Scale – WL</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>4.59</i>	<i>4.22</i>
Attitude toward Teachers and Classes Scale – YFP	19	5.11	5.52*
<i>Attitude toward Teachers and Classes Scale – WL</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>4.87</i>	<i>4.63</i>
Attitude toward School Scale – YFP	19	5.23	5.31*
<i>Attitude toward School Scale – WL</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>5.26</i>	<i>4.63</i>
Goal Valuation Scale – YFP	19	6.08	6.05
<i>Goal Valuation Scale – WL</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>6.11</i>	<i>6.04</i>
Motivation and Self-regulation Scale - YFP	19	4.64	4.87**
<i>Motivation and Self-regulation Scale – WL</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>5.09</i>	<i>4.31</i>
School Problem Behaviors Scale – YFP	20	1.72	1.53
<i>School Problem Behaviors Scale – WL</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>1.89</i>	<i>1.63</i>

** $p < .05$. A statistically significant interaction was revealed for this scale; YFP participation was associated with more positive outcomes on this scale.

* Although not statistically significant, potentially interesting data patterns are apparent for these scales. In all cases, the YFP group showed improvement relative to the Waiting List group.

Table 2

*Pre- and Post-test Means for YFP Program Participants vs. Waiting List (WL) Participants:
YFP Parent Survey Scales*

Scale Name	N	Pre-test	Posttest
YFP Parent: Commitment to Learning Scale - YFP	15	3.62	3.73*
YFP Parent: Commitment to Learning Scale – WL	11	4.02	3.75
YFP Parent: Family Support Scale – YFP	16	4.11	4.33
YFP Parent: Family Support Scale – WL	11	4.09	4.14
YFP Parent: Family Communications Scale – YFP	16	3.85	4.14*
YFP Parent: Family Communications Scale – WL	11	3.95	3.94
YFP Parent: Social Competency Scale – YFP	14	3.53	3.96**
YFP Parent: Social Competency Scale – WL	11	3.82	3.66
YFP Parent: Other Trusted Adults Scale – YFP	16	3.75	4.31*
YFP Parent: Other Trusted Adults Scale – WL	11	4.05	4.05
YFP Parent: Child Self-confidence Scale – YFP	15	2.93	3.73
YFP Parent: Child Self-confidence Scale – WL	11	3.73	4.09
YFP Parent: Parental Efficacy Scale – YFP	15	3.92	3.97*
YFP Parent: Parental Efficacy Scale – WL	11	4.12	3.96

** $p < .05$. A statistically significant interaction was revealed for this scale; YFP participation was associated with more positive outcomes on this scale.

*Although not statistically significant, potentially interesting data patterns are apparent for these scales. In all cases, the YFP group showed improvement relative to the Waiting List group.

Table 3

Paired samples t-test results of youth and/or parent perceptions of youth academic achievement, social competency, and family bonds for the 2004 and 2005 school years.

	Posttest mean score (SD)	Retrospective Pretest mean score (SD)	Mean change (SD)	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Academic Achievement					
2004 Youth Report <i>N=304</i>	21.38 (4.78)	23.70 (4.31)	2.32 (3.94)	10.28	.001
2005 Youth Report <i>N=181</i>	24.26 (4.16)	21.67 (5.20)	2.59 (3.72)	9.36	.001
2004 Parent Report <i>N=272</i>	19.66 (5.27)	22.74 (4.84)	3.08 (3.91)	12.99	.001
2005 Parent Report <i>N=160</i>	23.17 (5.00)	20.59 (5.38)	2.58 (3.30)	9.86	.001
Social Competency					
2004 Youth Report <i>N=299</i>	28.93 (6.24)	31.63 (5.99)	2.70 (4.27)	10.92	.001
2005 Youth Report <i>N=184</i>	32.23 (5.60)	29.30 (6.31)	2.93 (4.42)	9.00	.001
2004 Parent Report <i>N=274</i>	25.53 (6.26)	29.27 (6.05)	3.74 (4.43)	13.97	.001
2005 Parent Report <i>N=159</i>	30.31 (5.65)	27.19 (5.84)	3.12 (4.21)	9.35	.001
Family Bonds					
2004 Youth Report <i>N=302</i>	41.43 (8.52)	43.77 (8.28)	2.34 (4.74)	8.59	.001
2005 Youth Report <i>N=172</i>	44.88 (7.72)	42.08 (9.15)	2.80 (4.46)	8.20	.001
2004 Parent Report <i>N=274</i>	41.52 (7.59)	45.20 (6.28)	3.68 (5.50)	11.08	.001
2005 Parent Report <i>N=157</i>	45.32 (6.88)	42.50 (7.32)	2.83 (5.23)	6.77	.001

Appendix A

Logic Model

4-H Mentoring: Youth and Families with Promise

Problem Statement: Many youth in Utah are at risk for: below average school performance, poor social skills, and weak family bonds.

Underlying assumption of design: "The development of the child is enhanced through her increased involvement, from childhood on, in responsible, task-oriented activities outside the home that bring her into contact with adults other than her parents" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 282).

